

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 81401**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2011-0020 EA

Location: R95W, T48N, Several Sections; all allotments are within 15 miles of Montrose, CO.

Project Name: Allotment Transfer and Change in Class of Livestock on the Pipeline,
S. Piney, Dry Creek Basin and Franklin Mesa Allotments

Applicant: Etchart Ranches

Background

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office completed Environment Assessment # DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2011-0020 EA which analyses the effects of adding sheep to the class of livestock during the transfer of grazing preferences for four allotments (Pipeline, S. Piney, Dry Creek Basin, and Franklin Mesa). The proposed action also adjusts grazing dates, stocking rates, AUMs and utilization.

BLM provided a public scoping and comment period from March 30, 2011 to April 29, 2011. BLM received 1 comment, which was addressed in the EA.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2011-0020 EA, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. The proposed action includes design features that serve as mitigation measures.

Rationale

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context

All allotments are within 15 miles of Montrose, primarily in the pinyon-juniper/sagebrush, sagebrush/grass, and sagebrush/mountain shrub communities. The area has been growing in recreational popularity in the past 5 years, and is used by hikers, mountain bikers, and motorized trail riders.

Intensity

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

Beneficial impacts of this project would be the addition of sheep to the class of livestock, added flexibility in livestock management, changes to the season of use, reduction in AUMs, and changes in terms and conditions of the permit, all of which would support the applicant's grazing operations and the BLM's objectives to promote healthy sustainable rangeland ecosystems. Adverse impacts could occur to recreation if there are conflicts between sheep guard dogs and recreationists.

2) *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*

There is potential conflict between sheep guard dogs and recreational users of the area during the month of May. Signs would be posted warning of guard dogs in the area. Potential impacts to public health and safety are not anticipated to be at a level that is significant.

3) *Unique Characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

Inventories have been completed for historic and cultural resources in the area and no potential impacts have been identified. There are not any identified Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wilderness Areas, Prime or Unique Farmlands, wetlands or Wild and Scenic Rivers. There is an area of land with wilderness characteristics within the project area; the action would not preclude the presence of wilderness characteristics.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

There is not expected to be any scientific and little if any public controversy with the proposal.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The proposed action is not unique for this area as livestock grazing, including sheep, has occurred here and on adjacent allotments in the past. The effects have been reasonably predictable, and effects from the proposed action would not be classified as highly uncertain or involving unique or unknown risks.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The Proposed Action would not set a precedent for future livestock grazing. Any future proposals would have to be evaluated on their own merits.

7) *Consideration of the action in relation to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

Other activities, including grazing, recreation, land development and farming are foreseeable but it is not anticipated that cumulative impacts of any significance would occur.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

Inventories have been completed for historic and cultural resources in the area and no significant impacts to districts, sites, highways, structures, or potential loss or destruction of significant scientific resources, have been identified. If any unidentified sites are discovered they would be avoided or mitigated so they would not be impacted.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.*

All threatened, endangered, candidate and sensitive species known to occur in the analysis area were considered in the EA. None of these species or their habitats would be adversely affected by the proposed action.

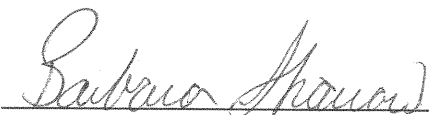
10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The proposed action does not threaten violation of any laws or regulations imposed for the protection of the environment.

Determination

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts; 2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Uncompahgre Basin Resource Management Plan; and 3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Approved:



Barbara Sharrow

Field Manager

Uncompahgre Field Office

7-26-13
Date